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ABSTRACT

To meet information needs of teachers and administrators, the Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services in New York State entered into an agreement with the Educational Services Group of Bibliographic Retrieval Services (BRS) which provides access to 30 national databases, and also created a "private" file or database comprised of information submitted by eight teacher centers in New York State. Using microcomputers, both intrastate access among teacher centers and intracounty access among seven school districts are possible. The "pay as you go" system has increased search services from between 65 and 75 to over 800 searches a year. A diagram of the information network, which has the School Practices Information File (SPIF) as a core, and a description of the development of the system are provided. Appended are a sample copy of a statement prepared by Bibliographic Retrieval Services detailing usage for 2 weeks in November and a sample billing for a school district's use of the online service. (RBF)

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NETWORKING AT THE INTERMEDIATE SERVICE AGENCY LEVEL: Utilization of SPIN and SPIF in School Districts

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Board of Cooperative Educational Services of Nassau County

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Educators at all levels are frequently confronted with the problem of acquiring appropriate educational information. The educational process also makes it difficult for communication among schools, among educators, and, at times, even among students themselves. Added to the concern of communication is the common issue of researching and obtaining information. How do educators access information pertaining to innovative curriculum, school improvement activities or techniques for teaching special students? Educational isolation often leads to "reinventing the wheel", with the result being the redesign and recreation of educational curriculum and materials.

In line with these needs, the Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), which is the largest of the 44 intermediate units in New York State, serving 56 school districts and upwards of 19,000 teachers and administrators, along with the Nassau County Regional Teacher Center, seven other federally funded centers in New York State, and the State Education Department, determined that the information needs of teachers and administrators could be met better by accessing resource data bases in an on-line system.

Our professional library, the Nassau Educational Resource Center (NERC), the site of our Teacher Center project, typically serviced 40 districts in Nassau County through subscription to the service. The Teacher Center permitted access (by all 56 districts) to our resources. Moreover, prior to the Teacher Center, we responded to search questions by liaisoning with the State Education Department office called Educational Programs and Studies Information Services (EPSIS). Turn around time on the search was often 2-3 weeks. Customer satisfaction was low, and volume, that is, the number of searches per year coming through NERC was poor, somewhere between 65-75 per year.

Through the efforts and resources of the BOCES and the federal funds available through the teacher center, we were able to enter into an agreement with the Educational Service Group (ESG), a division of Bibliographic Retrieval Services (BRS). In essence, this agreement allowed us to access (from NERC) 30 national data bases. We trained the librarians in NERC and the staff of the Teacher Center to search.

At the same time, we were discussing the possibility of creating a "private" file or data base, which could potentially house the unique holdings of the NERC collection, such as, locally created curriculum, specialized items in special and occupational education, etc. Although this potential would eventually be realized, the idea was expanded through collaboration with the seven other Teacher Center's in New York State. Each center would submit, based upon an agreed format, information that it deemed important to its service area. For example, one center submitted human resource (consultant) information, another center a field trip/organization referral guide, etc. Ultimately what was created was the New York State Teacher Center Resource Base and Network.

(SEE SED PUBLICATION)

Since all eight Teacher Centers are accessing information through the same system, they are also able to communicate (electronically) with each other. This capability permits message switching, and the system does not require someone to be on the receiving end at the time that the message is sent. Further, a newsletter was established to enhance communication among the centers and ESG.

At this time there are over 4000 resources in the Teacher Center database with approximately 2000 of those coming from NERC holdings.

In addition to this intrastate network and file, an intra-county network among seven school districts and the BOCES has been developed. This system, when fully operational, will strengthen the information exchange capability between and among Nassau County school districts and the BOCES.

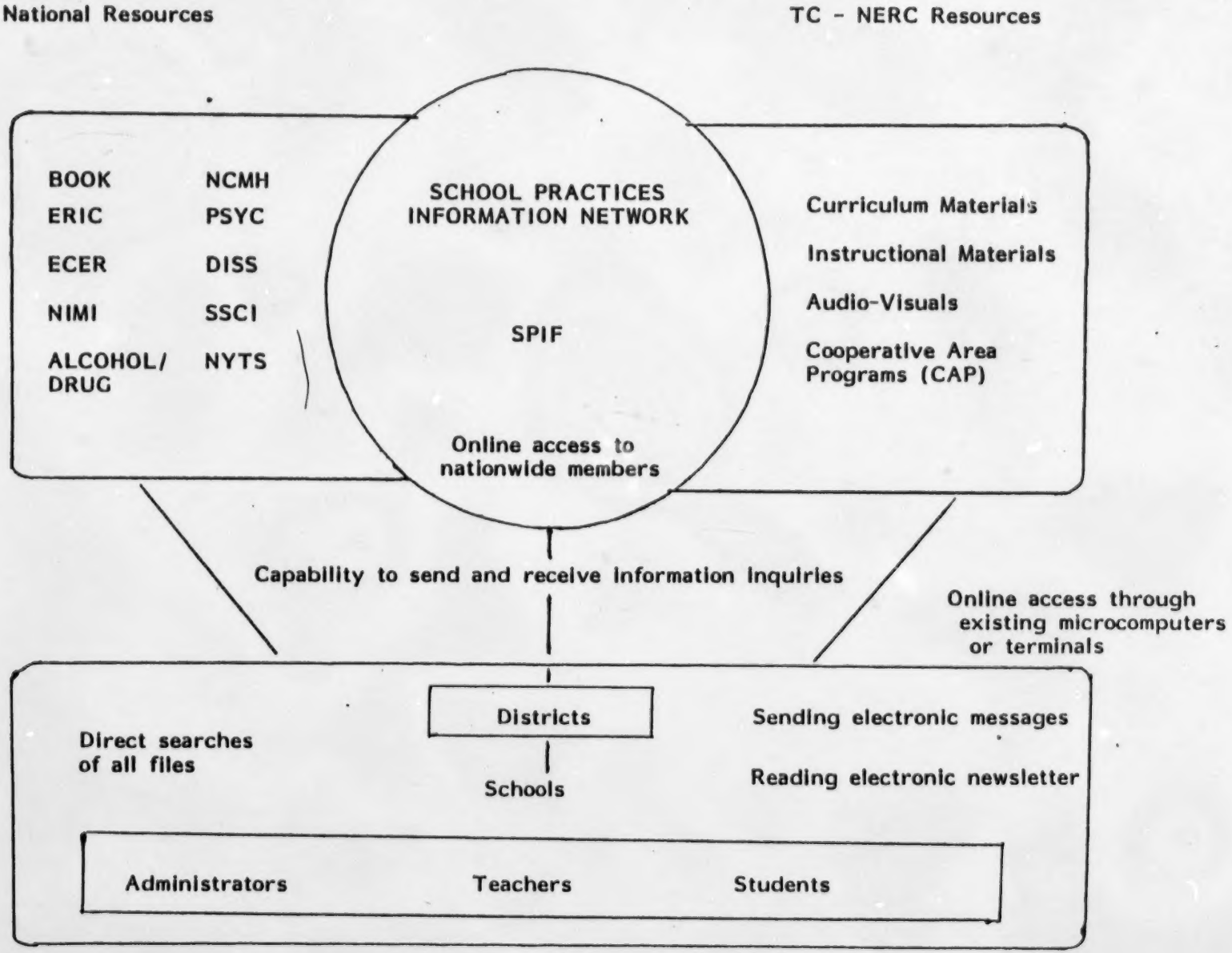
The preliminary thinking on this project suggested that the ability to search several resource bases on line was certainly an advance over what we were doing at the library. In addition, the creation of the New York State Teacher Center data base was still another advancement. However, this system still made it necessary for the client to either call the center, or actually come to the center to discuss the parameters of the search. Would it be possible for a local school district to search directly from some point in the district, the library, principal's office, central office, etc.? Although over 400 terminals were already in the field, accessing existing management or instructional programs from the BOCES, most of these were "hard wired" and thus not available for searching purposes. The ESG network requires a telephone/modem connection. This lead us to the question - What about microcomputers?

Typically, microcomputers are used in schools and administration offices for computer-assisted instruction or for management purposes. Access to information resources and communication capability via microcomputers is not widely known; however, this application addresses the above concerns using equipment already residing in many school districts.

Access to these automated resource bases is possible via any existing microcomputer or terminal with the addition of a telephone modem where you simply call up the system to access these resources.

We envisioned a network as indicated in Fig. 1 with SPIF as the core of the network.

INFORMATION SUPPORT AND NETWORKING SERVICES



Working cooperatively with ESG, we planned a demonstration of the system (for our component districts) using a microcomputer (Apple II Plus). At the demonstration, ESG staff members were on hand to conduct the search, demonstrate electronic message switching, the electronic newsletter, an on-line profile of members, and the capability to contact members electronically for information requests.

At this time, we also provided our audience with information regarding hardware requirements, that is, depending on which microcomputer you were using in your school district, what equipment (modem, coupler, etc.) would you need. What would be the approximate cost? Where can I get the equipment? Further, specific information was made available on each data base in the system, and finally costs were reviewed for those districts that would make a commitment to come into the system.

Following this demonstration, districts were asked to sign a "letter of intent" to participate. Seven districts committed themselves and a planning meeting was held with the interested districts. We agreed to train two persons from each district for two days. ESG provided the training, the manuals, and the technical assistance for each of the districts. A representative from each district completed the SPIN profile, which is a requirement of ESG to come on-line at a reduced rate. The profile is then entered into the network and includes such information as contact people, demographic profile of the school district, district areas of interest, and district areas of expertise, that is, model programs that are in the district.

Probably the biggest selling point of this service is that the costs are prorated on a use basis. It is a "pay as you go" system. Hence, the district could sign the letter of intent, complete the SPIN profile, obtain the necessary hardware, have staff trained, and still not have spent any additional monies, until such time as they began searching.

Most costs were subsumed into a prorated hourly rate, that is, training, manuals, telecommunication costs, on-line searching, and technical assistance were part of a rate established by BOCES and ESG. Not included in this rate were off line print costs, royalties on certain data bases, and additional training days requested by the district. In addition, in New York State approved services provided by BOCES are state aid reimbursed, that is, depending on the wealth of the school district, some percentage, ranging from 40-60% on the average, would be reimbursed by the SED to the school district in the next fiscal year.

Some problems that have occurred with this service include attendant hardware acquisition, staff turnover, that is, people who were trained left the district, lack of time to spend actually searching, which results in diminished skills, and a lack of an administrative structure within the district, namely, who is responsible for this activity?

We recently sponsored a workshop for librarians and administrators on the use of the microcomputer in the library. Part of the workshop, attended by 160 people, included a demonstration of the system. The enthusiasm that was generated will probably result in additional service requests and I would expect that we will see a substantial increase in the number of districts that will participate in the system.

Apart from the development of this network of school districts, we have seen a tremendous increase in the use of our search service at the center. I originally indicated that our volume, prior to being on-line, was somewhere between 65-75. During a comparable time period, September 1980 through August 1981, over 800 searches were conducted from either the NERC Center or from one of your satellite centers in Nassau County.

Included in the Appendix is a sample copy of a statement prepared by BRS which details the usage for a two week time period in November. If you will note, I have circled both SPIF and TCNR entries. TCNR is the New York State Teacher Center database. Also included is a sample billing advice for one of the school districts in the system.

In conclusion, with information increasing at such a phenomenal rate, access to all information becoming an absolute necessity, and at the same time monies becoming less available, we envision a sophisticated network which will enable school districts to obtain information for all aspects of the educational community, students, teachers, administrators, board members, and parents.

APPENDIX

*** B R S DETAI

11/01/81

PREPARED FOR: [redacted]
MARK ROSENBAUM
NASSAU COUNTY TEACHERS CENTER
111 CANTIAQUE ROCK RD
WESTBURY, NY 11590

SUB ACCT	ENTRY DATE	SESSION NUMBER	DATA BASE	CONNECT HOURS	PRINTOFF QUERIES	PRINTOFF CITATIONS	PRINTOFF PAGES
	11/03	969	ERIC	.439			
	11/03	970	ERIC	.134			
	11/03	971	ERIC	.096			
	11/03	972	CROS	.081			
	11/03	973	BOOK	.093			
	11/04	974	ERIC	.024			
	11/04	975	TCNR	.056			
	11/04	976	ERIC	.121	Q0628	14	8
	11/04	977	PSYC	.054	Q0629	3	2
	11/04	978	ERIC	.305			
	11/05	979	ERIC	.071			
	11/05	980	ERIC	.129			
	11/05	981	ECER	.095			
	11/05	982	SPIF	.065			
	11/05	983	ECER	.135			
	11/05	984	ERIC	.223			
	11/05	985	ECER	.107			
	11/05	986	ERIC	.233			
	11/05	987	DISS	.158			
	11/05	988	SPIF	.132			
	11/05	989	ECER	.042			
	11/05	990	ERIC	.026			
	11/05	991	ERIC	.035			
	11/05	992	ERIC	.055			
	11/05	993	ECER	.013			
	11/06	994	ERIC	.092	Q0643	3	2
	11/06	995	BOOK	.070	Q0645	6	1
	11/06	996	BBIP	.050	Q0647	2	1
	11/06	997	ERIC	.048			
	11/06	998	ERIC	.158	Q0648	5	4
	11/06	999	PSYC	.156	Q0649	25	12
	11/06	1000	MGMT	.077	Q0650	13	4
	11/09	1001	ERIC	.236			
	11/10	1002	ERIC	.293			
	11/10	1003	ERIC	.504			
	11/10	1004	ERIC	.098	Q0651	10	6
	11/10	1005	ERIC	.065	Q0652	25	17
	11/10	1006	ERIC	.532			
	11/11	1007	ERIC	.547	Q0653	43	21
	11/12	1008	ERIC	.406	Q0654	18	13
	11/12	1009	TCNR	.122			
	11/12	1010	ERIC	.094			
	11/12	1011	SPIF	.075			
	11/13	1012	ERIC	.073			
	11/13	1013	ERIC	.076	Q0655	10	4
	11/13	1014	EIVI	.065	Q0656	10	4
	11/13	1015	CROS	.109			
	11/13	1016	COMP	.067			
	11/13	1017	NTIS	.096	Q0657	3	2
	11/13	1018	ERIC	.080			
	11/16	1019	ERIC	.211	Q0658	6	4
	11/16	1020	ERIC	.494	Q0659	12	7
					Q0660	15	9
					Q0661	15	9
	11/16	1021	ERIC	.011			
	11/16	1022	ERIC	.124	Q0662	9	5
	11/17	1023	ERIC	.072	Q0663	16	10
					Q0664	14	7
					Q0665	11	6
	11/17	1024	ERIC	.193	Q0666	24	13
	11/17	1025	ERIC	.107	Q0667	54	29
	11/17	1026	PSYC	.037	Q0668	9	5
	11/17	1027	ERIC	.171	Q0670	18	8
					Q0671	12	0
	11/19	1028	SPIF	.078			
	11/19	1029	ERIC	.305	Q0672	5	4
	11/19	1030	PSYC	.007			

ESGNB 1
BALDWIN

ON-LINE SUPPORT SERVICE

DETAILED USAGE REPORT

12/1/81 - 12/31/81

DATA BASE	CONNECT HOURS	CONNECT HOUR RATE	SUB TOTAL
ECER	.156	$ 35	$ 5.46
ERIC	2.409	35	84.32
MESH	.303	35	10.61
PREM	.086	35	3.01
SPIF	.767	35	26.85
TCNR	.231	35	8.09
TOTAL CONNECT HOURS	3.952		SUB TOTAL $138.34

CONNECT HOUR ROYALTIES		ROYALTY RATE/HOUR	
ECER	.156	$ 5.00	.78
SPIF	.767	10.00	7.67
			SUB TOTAL $8.45

OFF LINE PRINTING	RATE/PAGE	
NUMBER OF PRINTOFF PAGES	$ .16	SUB TOTAL 0
		ACCOUNT TOTAL $146.77